

Ulysses S. Grant Cottage  
(Howard Potter House)  
995 Ocean Avenue  
Long Branch  
Monmouth County  
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-884

HABS  
NJ  
13-LOBRA,  
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ULYSSES S. GRANT COTTAGE  
(HOWARD POTTER HOUSE)

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Location: 995 Ocean Avenue, Long Branch, Monmouth County,  
New Jersey

Present Use: Demolished November, 1963.

Significance: This beach cottage, constructed in 1866, was  
owned by Ulysses S. Grant and frequented by him  
during his presidency. Architecturally, the  
house is a interesting example of Stick Style  
design.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1866.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Constructed by Howard Potter of New York City. In 1869, the house was purchased by George W. Childs, Philadelphia publisher, George Pullman, railroad car magnate, and Moses Taylor, New York financier. These men presented the house to President Ulysses S. Grant as a gift. After Grant's death the house was purchased by Edward Goldsmith, who lived there until his death in 1906. One of Goldsmith's daughters married a James Goldsmith, and they took up residence in 1914. In 1963, the house was owned by Gerald Lawrence.
4. Alterations and additions: Originally the structure was only two-and-a-half stories tall. The original truncated hipped roof had an iron balustrade enclosing an observation platform, and there were jerkinhead dormers on all four slopes. The porte cochere is an addition, the main entrance originally being recessed under a second-floor balcony, with access by a wide, single-run stair. The solarium is also an addition. (See 1870 view of the house which illustrates, "The President's Cottage at Long Branch," Harper's Weekly, XIV, No. 711, 13 August 1870.)

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: An interesting example of a mid-19th century summer house, exhibiting an eclectic, Stick Style design. The porches and solarium are significant elements, reflecting the house's purpose as a summer, beach retreat.

2. Condition of fabric: Prior to the building's demolition in November 1963, the condition was fair. The structure had been vacant for a time and had been subject to deterioration thru neglect and vandalism.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Three stories and attic on elevated basement. Generally rectangular in shape with porte cochere on front (west) elevation and octagonal solarium on the southeast corner (attached to the main block diagonally by a short hallway at the second floor level and a porch at the first floor level).
2. Foundations: Rubble masonry below grade, red brick (common bond) above grade, elevated approximately 5'0" at front of house and 3'0" at rear. The solarium rested on brick piers placed at each corner with a crawl space below.
3. Walls: Frame wall construction, 2" x 4" wood studs with cement nogging on the first floor. Pseudo half-timbering on the exterior (diagonal on the first and second floors, horizontal and vertical on the third floor). Horizontal 1" x 6" sheathing over studs with vertical wood nailers; metal lath and 1" of stucco with rough exterior surface.
4. Structural system, framing: Cast iron pipe columns placed at the four corners of the structure and also where needed on the exterior and interior of the building, supporting twin bolted iron I beams spanning east-west, in turn supporting the 4" x 8" second floor joists. Secondary iron member (inverted T) divides the long span at the north end and supports the second floor joists and partition. The structure is completely frame above the second floor line.
5. Porches: Porte cochere on west (front) elevation. Four bracketed octagonal columns support the heavy timber trusses that frame the gable roof; bracketed overhanging eaves with large cymation molding. The underside of the gable is finished with narrow beaded boards over chamfered timber rafters. Twin run elliptical stairway provides access to the porch level and main entrance; slender turned balusters and handsome molded railing.

Two story porch (lower story taller), generally eight feet deep, extends around north, east, and south elevations (7 bays on a side) and part of the west elevation (2 bays); square chamfered wood columns, approximately 8'0" on center and handsome turned balusters and molded railing. Sectioned hipped roof (covered with hexagonal slate tiles) over north, east and part of the south elevations; third floor overhangs porches on southwest corner, second and third floors overhang porch on northwest

corner. Balcony (approximately 5' deep) at second floor over porte cochere.

6. Chimneys: Plain rectangular brick chimneys.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Main entrance at center of west (front) elevation, wide doorway, pilaster trim, door missing. Doorway at center of east (rear) elevation, very plain board trim with panelled and glazed door. Secondary entrance at center of south elevation, plain board trim, door missing. Hooded doorway to balcony (2nd floor - east elevation), pilaster trim, panelled door, and full height louvered shutters.

b. Windows: Assymetric placement of windows (various sizes and groupings, single and twin), all with double hung wood sash and plain board trim (formed by half timbering) and louvered shutters. Some original leaded stained glass remains on the first floor.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: Series of intersecting hipped roofs, all covered with hexagonal slate tiles. Solarium has an eight-panel pyramidal roof covered with hexagonal slate tiles. The ridges have raised beaded flashing with finials at the peaks.

b. Cornice, eaves: Plaster cove cornice with large wood cymation moulding extends around perimeter of house at eave line.

c. Dormers: Low, sectioned hexagonal dormers with six-light wood sash.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The first floor has a large vestibule and central hall with surrounding rooms. The plan is essentially the same for the upper floors. The third floor is subdivided to provide small bedrooms (probably living quarters for household servants).
2. Stairways: Main stairway to second and third floors located on north side of central hall; straight run with U-turn and short return, decorative brackets, slender turned balusters and panelled wainscoting.

3. Flooring: Handsome parquetry floors in first floor hall and rooms - tile floor in kitchen. Modern linoleum over original wood flooring on second and third floors.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: Portions of historical information compiled by Edgar Dinkelspiel, President of the Long Branch Historical Museum (1964).
2. Secondary and published sources: "The President's Cottage at Long Branch," Harper's Weekly, XIV, No. 711, (August 13, 1870), p. 525.

Prepared by:  
Druscilla J. Null  
Historian  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
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